Who can plug a well?

The DNR recommends that you hire an Iowa DNR certified well contractor to plug your well. As a well owner, you can do the work yourself if two conditions are met. 1) The well owner must plug the well following the current well plugging rules and under supervision of the local county environmental health department, and 2) A certified well contractor or the local county environmental health agent sign a form stating that the well plugging was performed according to the state's current well plugging rules

One important point to think about is that when a well owner wants to plug their own well, the well will no longer qualify for cost share assistance under the Grants to Counties (GTC) well plugging program.

Please contact your local county environmental health office or the DNR for more information on well plugging or to find Iowa DNR Certified Well Contractors.

When to plug?

All classes of wells which are abandoned must be properly plugged within 90 days of the date of abandonment.

Can I get financial assistance?

Financial assistance is available at the county level through the Grants to Counties (GTC) Well Program. The Bureau of Environmental Health Services at the Iowa Department of Public Health oversees the financial administration of the GTC Well Program. The bureau works closely with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, who provides technical oversight of water well testing, water well closure, and water well renovation through the GTC program.

Counties participating in the GTC program can reimburse property owners up to $500 for each well plugged and $1000 for each well renovated.

For more information contact:

Your county health department

http://www.iowadnr.gov/Portals/idnr/uploads/water/wells/co_sanitarians.pdf

Or contact:

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Private Well Program at (515) 725-0462

Available web sites:

Private Well Plugging Program
www.iowadnr.gov/wellplugging

Find an Iowa DNR Certified Well Contractor
www.iowadnr.gov/wellcontractorcert

Private Well Program
www.iowadnr.gov/waterwells

Grants to Counties Program
http://idph.iowa.gov/ehs/grants-to-counties

Plugging Abandoned Wells in Iowa

Partners in protecting your drinking water

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Iowa Department of Public Health

Why plug your old wells?

In 1987, the Iowa Groundwater Protection Act was passed by our legislature to help prevent further contamination of one of Iowa's most precious resources; our groundwater. Proper plugging of abandoned wells was included in the legislation as well as a funding mechanism to help assist well owners with the cost of well plugging.

Abandoned wells can be a direct pathway for contaminants to enter the groundwater and cause water quality problems for nearby existing and future water supply wells. Large diameter wells, well pits and cisterns also pose a safety hazard for people and pets that can access and fall into these structures.

By definition, any well that is no longer in use, or is in such poor physical condition that it cannot be repaired to be safely used, is considered abandoned. This applies to all wells, including public drinking water wells, monitoring wells, commercial wells, private supply wells, heat pump wells, and irrigation wells.

Abandoned wells can be plugged, renovated to today's standards, or repaired to standby condition. A well in standby condition has been repaired and capped to prevent contamination, but can easily put back into operation in the future. Each option is designed to meet the goal of protecting groundwater from contamination

What types of materials are needed?

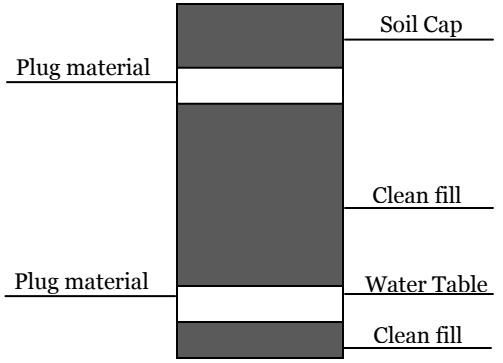
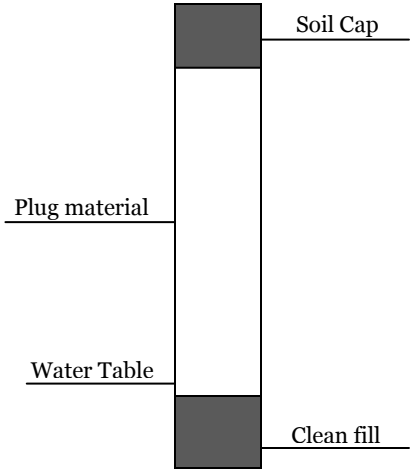
Properly plugging a well requires the use of both fill materials *AND* sealing materials.

Fill is clean, granular material such as washed sand or pea gravel which is used in larger diameter wells to fill space and reduce the cost of plugging.

Sealing material is bentonite clay or "neat" cement (cement mixed without gravel) and is used to replace the earth's natural confining layers that were destroyed during the construction of the well.

How the well is plugged

Wells fall into one of three well classes when well plugging is discussed. The method of well plugging depends on the well class and the local geology. See the table below to identify each type of well and one example on how it should be plugged.

	Dimensions	Description	Diagram
Class 1	Greater than 18 inches in diameter and less than 100 feet deep; typically located in central, southern and western Iowa; potential physical and pollution hazards. Commonly called bored wells, dug wells, augured wells, seepage wells, or cistern wells.	Slowly place alternating layers of fill and plug material. One foot of Plug material is used at the top of the water table, and again four feet from the top of the well to achieve a proper seal. Fill is used between plug layers.	
Class 2	Less than 18 inches in diameter and more than 100 feet deep; these can occur anywhere in Iowa, especially in northern and eastern Iowa; potential pollution hazards. Commonly called cased wells, drilled wells, deep wells, or artesian wells.	The plugging procedure for Class 2 wells will depend on the geologic formation that the well penetrates and whether or not a well log exists for the well. Because of this we recommend that you hire a Certified Well Contractor to plug all Class 2 wells. Find certified well contractors at the following web site: www.iowadnr.gov/wellcontractorcert	
Class 3	2 inches or less in diameter, and shallow, 12 - 40 feet deep. Commonly called sandpoint wells or driven wells.	Wells can be plugged by simply pulling the pipe from the ground and then filling the hole with bentonite clay, or if it cannot be pulled out, the pipe can be cut four feet below the surface and the well filled with plugging material.	